


4 March 1957

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Mr. Bissell has asked that I assemble information on the NACA radar-reflecting balloons and forward this information to you. I believe this subject was discussed during his last visit with you. Enclosed are three photos of the proposed  of equipment which NACA plans to utilize for their outer space study in connection with the IGY. This is the material Mr. Bissell promised to furnish you.

In my discussion with Dr. Rhode of NACA I learned that the earth satellite, when attaining its altitude for orbit, will launch the sub-satellite, a small plastic, deflated balloon which rolls up into a small package about 2 1/2 by 5 inches. After launching, the balloon is inflated to a diameter of 20 inches and after inflation the small inflating capsule is detached from the balloon and the balloon then floats freely in space. I believe the three prints enclosed are self explanatory and the narrative on the backs further amplifies the pictures.

I understand NACA could build these for us in limited quantities up to about 100 without too much trouble. However, if we wanted them in quantities of 1,000 or more, it would be wiser to procure them from some company such as General Mills. They are relatively simple to construct and quite inexpensive. There is no doubt that a modification could be made to our vehicle to handle a number of these balloons in the small deflated package in order that a number of controlled releases could be realized. The need for such an item and the reaction that would be experienced through their use is still a matter for conjecture. I, myself, doubt the value of using such articles, or even the principle, in our program.

When you have formed an opinion on the merits and possible use of this equipment as a decoy for our project, Mr. Bissell would appreciate your discussing this with him.

Very truly yours,

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Colonel, USAF